

Good afternoon Representative Guerrero, Senator Maynard, and distinguished members of the transportation committee. My name is Douglas Pratt and I am a 6 year veteran Inspector of the Department of Motor Vehicles. I am here today to show support for House Bill 5023.

My law enforcement career began in 1997 as police officer in the town of Stonington. In 1999 I became a Trooper with the Connecticut State Police. In 2005 I transferred to the Dept. of Motor Vehicles as an Inspector.

I'm currently assigned to the eastern district truck squad where I enforce federal commercial motor vehicle laws, all Connecticut State Title 14 laws and regulations. I issue Infractions, Misdemeanor Summons, conduct investigations, prepare arrest warrants, and make custodial arrests.

My job requires me to maintain the same police officer training and certification as every other police officer in the State of Connecticut. For years the definition of peace officer has included all other POST certified police officers in Connecticut except Motor Vehicle Inspectors.

I have gone through more training as a motor vehicle inspector than I did in the State Police or the Stonington police. I make over a thousand traffic stops each year and face the same hazards and risks every day that I did in my previous law enforcement jobs. I was very surprised to learn after being hired as a DMV inspector six years ago that I'm not protected while performing these same duties.

Although our primary function is motor vehicle enforcement we could at any moment during the course of our shift be thrust into the middle of a dangerous or deadly situation requiring immediate action. We operate on the interstate highways, rural towns, and on inner city streets. We often work in close proximity to businesses and residential homes. More than once I have been caught in the middle of a law enforcement incident outside of traffic enforcement due to my proximity to an active incident. I also conduct investigations requiring me to go to businesses and private residences.

I am grateful that four years ago, with the support of many members of this committee, we were able to include our job title within six statutes to help protect our liability exposure. Although these statutes cover a number of circumstances that we may encounter, they fail to protect us in every statute that lists the verbiage, "police officer".

Over the past decade, similar bills have been introduced before this legislature only to face unwarranted opposition. Let me assure you that the inclusion of my job title in this definition is about liability protection and not to expand our arrest authority. My police authority and powers of arrest come from CGS 14-8. That statute will remain the same. I am trained, equipped and paid by the State of Connecticut to keep the roads safe and protect our citizens. It is now time for the State of Connecticut to protect us. The Inspectors in the Commercial Vehicle Safety Division have been called, "the best kept secret in Connecticut". I would encourage you to contact the DMV and spend a morning riding with any one of our Inspectors. All of you are more than welcome to ride with me for a shift. I'm certain you will gain a greater understanding of the importance of our job. Please vote in favor of bill #5023. Thank you again for your time and consideration.